



Committee on the Rights of the Child Secretariat
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
Palais Wilson - 52 rue des Pâquis
CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland

April 15, 2024

Re: Information on Egypt for consideration by the Committee on the Rights of the Child at its 96th Session (6 May – 24 May 2024)

Introduction

1. We present this submission in advance of the 96th session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child ('the Committee'), taking place between 6 - 24 May 2024, to support the Committee's review of the State of Egypt. This submission has been submitted jointly by Equality Now, Ibrahimia Media Centre, Blooming Rose Coptic Association, Farah Foundation for Development, Egyptians Without Borders, Sabaya El Khair Association, and the Egyptian Foundation for Family Development.
2. This report is submitted as part of the Young Women for Awareness, Agency, Advocacy, and Accountability (YW4A)¹ program implemented in Palestine, Egypt, Kenya, and South Sudan. The program's long-term outcome is to strengthen and diversify young women's participation and amplify their voices to effectively influence decision-making toward gender-just laws, policies, norms, and practices related to their bodily integrity and equal participation.
3. The issues and practices detailed in our report highlight the State's failure to fulfil its duty to protect girls from harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage in accordance with Article 24 (3) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and general recommendation number 18 of CRC, discriminatory inheritance practices in accordance with Article 2 of CRC, legal protections for children in digital spaces in accordance with CRC General Recommendation No. 25, and guardianship rights free from sex discrimination and guided by the principle of the best interests of the child in accordance with Article 9 of CRC.

Comprehensive Law on Violence Against Women

¹ <https://yw4a.org/>

4. A proposed unified bill to combat all forms of violence against women in Egypt has been tabled to the Egyptian parliament in March 2022.² The unified bill is hoped to pave the way for a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing violence against women and girls. Enacting this bill would also grant legal clarity – for both victims and law enforcement agencies – as it sets clear definitions and parameters for various forms of violence against women and girls while streamlining legal processes and making access to justice more efficient.
5. The current draft of the bill defines and criminalises sexual offences and proposes the establishment of specialised units within the police that provide additional protections for women and girls.
6. The proposed bill further criminalises child and forced marriage, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, and other forms of violence, which conforms to the joint General Recommendation No. 31 of CEDAW and General Comment No. 18 of CRC on harmful practices.³
7. In addition, the draft bill criminalises abortion and extends criminal responsibility to the performing doctor, health practitioners, and relatives involved in the act of abortion with harsher penalties. The Committee has strongly advocated for the realisation of children’s right to sexual and reproductive health services, urging States to “ensure universal access to a comprehensive package of sexual and reproductive health interventions.”⁴ The Committee has recognised that adolescents should have access to “safe abortion and post-abortion care services, irrespective of whether abortion itself is legal.”⁵ More broadly, the Committee has also urged States to adopt child-sensitive health approaches, including “adolescent-friendly health services which require health practitioners and facilities to be welcoming and sensitive to adolescents, to respect confidentiality and to deliver services that are acceptable to adolescents.”⁶
8. Criminalising abortion does not conform to international human rights standards, including the right to the highest attainable standard of health. While Article 24 of the Convention does not explicitly mention reproductive health, it underscores the importance of access to healthcare services that promote physical and mental well-being, including reproductive healthcare for adolescents. This can be interpreted to

² <https://nwrcegypt.org/en/draft-uniform-law-for-combating-violence-against-women-in-the-egyptian-parliament-2022/>

³ See Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 24(3), G.A. Res. 44/25, annex, U.N. GAOR, 44th Sess., Supp. No. 49, U.N. Doc. A/44/49 (1989) (entered into force Sept. 2, 1990); see also Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 4: Adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, (33rd Sess., 2003), in *Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations Adopted by Human Rights Treaty Bodies*, paras. 24 & 39(g), U.N. Doc. HRI/GEN/1/Rev.9 (Vol. II) (2008).

⁴ General Comment No. 15: On the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (art. 24), (62nd Sess., 2013), in *Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations Adopted by Human Rights Treaty Bodies*, paras. 53-54, U.N. Doc. CRC/C/GC/15 (2013)

⁵ *Ibid*, para 70

⁶ *Ibid* 2, para 52

include providing safe abortion services for children who have been victims of rape or incest or when the pregnancy has fatal health implications for the mother.

9. The proposed amendment to criminalise abortion is also in opposition to Egypt's international human rights obligations, as seen in several cases addressing children's right to sexual and reproductive health services as adjudicated by international and regional human rights bodies.⁷ The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) further emphasises that women have the right to make decisions about their own bodies, including decisions related to abortion. Restrictive laws that criminalise abortion can interfere with the right to autonomy.⁸
10. Furthermore, the criminalisation of abortion can disproportionately affect marginalised and disadvantaged groups of girls, leading to discrimination in access to reproductive healthcare services, particularly those living in poverty or facing other forms of marginalisation.⁹ It may also lead to adverse health outcomes for women and girls, including unsafe abortions, maternal mortality, and morbidity.
11. International human rights bodies have emphasised the importance of ensuring access to safe and legal abortion services to protect women's lives and health.¹⁰ The stigma surrounding sexuality, in conjunction with the discrimination and inequalities that girls face, can prevent them from accessing sexual and reproductive health services. Moreover, their inability to access such services can perpetuate cycles of inequality and discrimination.¹¹
12. Marital rape is not criminalised in Egypt. Marital rape and child marriage are two interconnected issues that often exist within the same context of gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls. Child marriage inherently involves a lack of informed consent, as children are not capable of fully understanding the consequences of marriage and sexual relations. Marital rape is essentially non-consensual sexual intercourse within marriage and, in child marriages, the concept of consent is often blurred, and girls may be coerced or forced into sexual activity against their will,

⁷ In *KL v. Peru*, the Human Rights Committee determined that denying abortion services to a child carrying a non-viable pregnancy, which posed a risk to her life and her physical and mental health, violated her rights to privacy; be free from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment; special protection as a minor; and a legal remedy. *K.L. v. Peru*, Human Rights Committee, Commc'n No. 1153/2003, paras. 6.3-6.5, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/85/D/1153/2003 (2005).

In *LC v. Peru*, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) found that denying a child urgently needed spinal surgery out of fear that it could harm her pregnancy violated the rights to privacy, freedom from gender stereotyping, health, and to a remedy. [*L.C. v. Peru*, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee), Commc'n No. 22/2009, U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/50/D/22/2009 (2011)].

⁸ CEDAW General Recommendation No. 24, para. 14. See also, HRC General Comment No. 28, para. 11

⁹ CEDAW General Recommendation No. 24, para. 15

¹⁰ CESCR General Comment No. 22, para. 14; HRC General Comment No. 36, para. 8

¹¹ Center for Reproductive Rights, Reproductive Rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, available at:

https://www.reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/Wright_Glo%20Adv_7.15.14.pdf

constituting marital rape. Child marriage often involves a significant power imbalance between spouses, with girls typically marrying older men. This power imbalance can perpetuate throughout the marriage, making it difficult for the girl to assert her rights, including the right to bodily autonomy and consent. In such situations, the risk of marital rape is heightened as the girl may lack the agency to refuse sexual advances.

13. In Egypt, 17% of girls are married before their 18th birthday, while 2% are married before the age of 15 years.¹²
14. The definition of marital rape under the proposed bill should be expanded to comply with international human rights standards, which require that sexual activity between married partners that is not based on a lack of consent should be criminalised. Essentially, both partners should be able to freely agree to engage in the sexual activity without coercion, force or other coercive circumstances,¹³ ensuring that the right to sexual autonomy and bodily integrity is upheld and respected for all parties.¹⁴
15. Article 19 of the Convention emphasises the right of children to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, abuse, neglect, negligent treatment, maltreatment, or exploitation, including sexual abuse. This provision obligates State parties to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, and educational measures to protect children from such forms of violence. State parties also have an obligation to take children's best interests as a primary consideration, which includes ensuring their safety.¹⁵
16. Specialised training for law enforcement on various topics allows for bridging gaps. It equips law enforcement officers with the knowledge, skills, and sensitivity needed to respond effectively to cases of gender-based violence, particularly those involving children. This ultimately contributes to better support and protection for survivors and enhances the likelihood of holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.
17. Developing a comprehensive bill to *combat all forms of violence against women and girls* aligns Egypt's legal framework with international standards and obligations, as outlined in several conventions, and is critical for ensuring the protection of women and girls' rights, improving access to justice, promoting gender equality, and creating a safer and more just society for all children and all citizens.

¹² Girls Not Brides. (n.d.). Egypt. Child Marriage Atlas. Retrieved from <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/egypt/>

¹³ Council of Europe, Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, CETS No. 210, art. 36(1)

¹⁴ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, G.A. Res. 217A (III), U.N. Doc A/810, at 71 (1948), art. 3; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, G.A. Res. 34/180, U.N. Doc A/34/46 (1979), art. 16(1)(a); see also Int'l Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, art. 7 (Dec. 16, 1966).

¹⁵ CRC, General Comment No. 14 on the Right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, Article 19, "Assessment of the child's best interests must also include consideration of the child's safety, that is, the right of the child to protection against all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse.

18. We respectfully urge the Committee to make the following proposed recommendations to the government of Egypt, specifically regarding the draft bill on Violence Against Women:

- Ensure that the legislation is adopted, which conforms with international human rights standards, to ensure girls are protected from all forms of violence and discrimination, including harmful practices, such as child marriage, and that provisions are in place that enable access to justice and reparations.
- Provide specialised and comprehensive training to law enforcement, including police officers, on how to handle cases of gender-based violence sensitively and effectively, especially when inflicted upon children. This training should cover topics such as trauma-informed approaches, cultural sensitivity, understanding the dynamics of power and control in abusive relationships, and interviewing techniques for victims.
- Adequately funding specialised police units to respond to gender-based violence effectively, including and recruiting social workers in these units who work with children, and promoting diversity and inclusion within the police force can help improve responses to gender-based violence, as officers from different backgrounds may bring unique perspectives and experiences to their work. By ensuring effective systems are in place, governments acknowledge the impact of sexual and gender-based violence on children, and they are fulfilling their obligation to protect and support children who are victims or witnesses of gender-based violence.
- Prioritise research and data collection on abortion rates amongst girls below the age of 18 years that would inform future laws and policies.
- Include in the draft bill a comprehensive definition of marital rape, aligning with international standards to address the pervasive issue of sexual violence within marriages. Such a definition should recognise that consent is paramount in all sexual encounters, and it should encompass a broad range of acts, including coercion and sexual assault within marital relationships.

Inheritance Rights for Women and Girls

19. In Egypt, inheritance is an integral part of Islamic law, which is recognised as the primary legal source according to the Egyptian Constitution.¹⁶ Inheritance laws dictate the distribution of assets among heirs according to specific rules outlined in the Quran and Hadith (sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad). These rules include guidelines on who can inherit, the proportion of the inheritance shares, and the priority of certain heirs over others. However, although Islam grants women inheritance rights, certain inheritance practices, such as male heirs receiving twice the share of female heirs, disadvantage women, perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination, and reinforce patriarchal structures, customs, and traditions. These practices also reinforce traditional gender roles and contribute to the devaluation of women's contribution and status within society.

¹⁶ Article 2 of the Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt

20. When women and girls are allocated smaller shares of inheritances or are excluded, they become financially dependent on male relatives, thus limiting their autonomy and hindering their ability to make independent decisions regarding their lives and futures. Furthermore, unequal distribution contributes to the economic disempowerment of women - by extension, their children and any girl below 18 among the heirs. This limits their access to broader resourcing generally and other economic opportunities necessary for securing their future financial stability.
21. Discriminatory inheritance practices conflict with principles of gender equality enshrined in the preamble of Egypt's Constitution¹⁷ and international human rights standards, creating legal inequalities and undermining efforts to promote gender justice and equality under the law. Specifically, Article 2 of the CRC prohibits discrimination against children on various grounds, including sex. This provision ensures that all children, regardless of gender, have equal rights and opportunities, including equal inheritance rights between girls and boys.
22. The CRC indirectly addresses inheritance rights by emphasising the principle of non-discrimination and the child's best interests. In contexts where inheritance rights impact the well-being of children, ensuring women's equal access to inheritance can also benefit children's rights.
23. In the case of an inheritance dispute amongst non-Muslims, the proportions of inheritance shares in Islamic Sharia are applied to the heirs.¹⁸
24. Despite legal provisions such as Article 49 of the new inheritance law¹⁹ aimed at criminalizing the intentional deprivation of heirs from their rightful inheritance, being a step towards more equitable inheritance distribution than in previous law. However, defacto discrimination in cultural practices and societal norms often leads to denying women and, by extension, children their rightful share.
25. Legal provisions often fail to ensure the actual delivery of inheritance rights specifically for women and girls in Upper Egypt, specifically when the inheritance includes agricultural land,²⁰ leading to a cycle of revenge by male family members and exposing women and girls to violence that arises from difficulties in enforcing court orders, thus hindering the right to inheritance. This results in economic violence, which emerges due to the financial burdens of legal proceedings, lawyer fees, and execution costs. Litigation also inflicts physical and psychological burdens, with women fearing reprisals from family members post-conviction. Addressing these challenges requires

¹⁷ The Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt 2014, amended 2019: Preamble reads: "...We are drafting a Constitution that holds all of us equal in rights and duties without discrimination of any kind. We the citizens, women and men, the Egyptian people, sovereigns in a sovereign homeland, this is the manifestation of our volition, this is the constitution of our revolution."

¹⁸ <https://apnews.com/article/a115f4d4a86c4f9b8cdb0802ccf3e5e5>

¹⁹ The amendment was published in the Official Gazette on 30 December 2017, after the Egyptian Parliament had passed it on 5 December 2017. A press release was published in Youm7 on December 5, 2017.

²⁰ Hind Ahmed Zaki, "What Difference Can It Make? Assessing the impact of gender equality and empowerment in matters of inheritance in Egypt," ResearchGate, accessed 31st March, 2024

not only legal reforms but also effective enforcement mechanisms and societal changes to eradicate discriminatory practices against women and ensure their full enjoyment of inheritance rights.

26. We respectfully urge the Committee to make the following proposed recommendations to the government of Egypt regarding the violations of CRC addressed in this section, specifically regarding inheritance laws:

- Egypt to amend the Inheritance law No. 77 of 1943 to include equal inheritance rights between male and female children, using progressive interpretations and modern understanding of Islamic jurisprudence (example of Tunisia in 2018 passing a landmark law in a Muslim-majority country that permits equal inheritance laws). The State should approach inheritance reform as a significant step toward gender equality and promoting children's rights within the context of Islamic law to exemplify how interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence can evolve to reflect changing social norms and values while remaining faithful to the core principles of Islam.

Guardianship Rights

27. The current Personal Status Law No. 25 of 1929 grants the father automatic legal guardianship of the children in the event of the divorce, without oversight, based solely on his inherent paternal authority. This means that mothers do not have the same custody and guardianship rights as fathers, and fathers hold unilateral control over the child, disregarding any consideration for the child's welfare or their best interests. The complexities of guardianship, crucial for both the child and the mother, receive scant attention in Egyptian legislation. Instead, the law mandates a hierarchical process where the mother's authority is undermined at various stages, with primary guardianship typically assigned to the father and thereafter to the paternal relatives and oversight handled by the Hasbi Majlis (a council whose mission is to protect the minor's inheritance).

28. Such restrictions curtail the mother's ability to act in the child's best interests, particularly in matters such as tuition fees, choice of school, etc., subject to discretionary approval by judges, perpetuating gender discrimination in guardianship matters, and neglecting the child's welfare. Therefore, the issue revolves around gender disparity in guardianship and the failure to prioritize the child's best interests. Legislation should be enacted to grant joint guardianship to both parents, and oversight should be entrusted to an impartial body, irrespective of the father or mother's guardianship.

29. Furthermore, Article 9 of the CRC emphasizes that children should not be separated from their parents against their will except when competent authorities determine that such separation is necessary for the child's best interests. This provision indirectly underscores the importance of guardianship rights in maintaining family unity and ensuring the well-being of children.

30. We respectfully urge the Committee to make the following proposed recommendations to the government of Egypt regarding the violations of CRC addressed in this section, specifically regarding guardianship rights:

- Amend the Personal Status law to ensure that after a divorce or separation, mothers are granted equal rights as fathers regarding guardianship rights and equal rights in deciding essential aspects of the child's life; the primary guardian should then be determined according to the principle of the best interests of the child.
- In the event a father is deceased, the Courts should determine the best interests of the children in determining the guardianship of the children and not automatically transfer guardianship to the paternal relatives of the child and intentionally exclude the children's mother.
- Ensure judicial discretion is constrained to upholding the best interests of the child and child protection to prevent arbitrary or biased decision-making, ensure consistency and fairness across cases, and prioritise the well-being and rights of children.

Child Marriage

31. Child Marriage in Egypt is regulated by various international and domestic laws aimed at safeguarding the rights and well-being of minors. CEDAW and the CRC, which Egypt has ratified, set a minimum age of marriage at 18. Nationally, according to Child Law No. 126 of 2008, the minimum age for marriage is 18 years old for both girls and boys, without exception. Similarly, the Egyptian Child Act also states the same. Despite these legal protections however, child marriage remains prevalent with 17% of women having been married before the age of 18, particularly in rural areas.²¹

32. Although the Egyptian government has proposed legal reforms that include stricter penalties for those involved in child marriage, including imprisonment and fines, challenges continue to persist, such as the widespread practice of Urfi marriages (unregistered customary marriages). Additionally, initiatives like the 2014 National Strategy to Prevent Child Marriage aim to reduce the prevalence of child marriage. Still, progress has been limited, especially since the main drivers of child marriage in Egypt, such as poverty and low levels of education among girls, continue to persist.

33. The consequences of child marriage are significant, affecting various aspects of the lives of those involved. Child marriage and FGM are intertwined, and they both contribute to high rates of school dropout among girls. Child brides are often forced to leave school to assume household responsibilities or to fulfill their roles as wives and mothers. Similarly, girls who undergo FGM may face challenges in continuing their education due to health complications, social stigma, or cultural expectations. Consequently, lack of education perpetuates the cycle of poverty and reinforces gender disparities.

²¹ UNFPA. "Cost of Child Marriage Throughout the Life Cycle of Girls and Women", 2023

34. Legal, health, and rights-related implications include difficulties documenting marriages, obtaining birth certificates for children, and accessing essential services like education and healthcare. Moreover, child marriage increases the risk of maternal death, as it subjects young girls to biological, social, economic, and psychological factors that increase their vulnerability to pregnancy-related complications.
35. We respectfully urge the Committee to make the following proposed recommendations to the government of Egypt regarding the violations of CRC addressed in this section, specifically regarding child marriage:
- Egypt should adopt a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach to combating child marriage, including unregistered customary marriages, that includes enhancing access to services and education, particularly comprehensive sexuality education, which is crucial for addressing the root causes of child marriage and empowering young girls.
 - Efforts to combat child marriage require comprehensive action, including the enactment of the proposed draft law criminalising child marriage, improving data collection systems, and the development of national action plans.

Addressing Female Genital Mutilation

36. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a harmful practice with severe health consequences, including bleeding, infections, and complications during childbirth. In Egypt, 86 percent of women and girls aged 15-49 have undergone some form of FGM.²² Despite efforts to combat it, such as the signing of international conventions and the introduction of legislation criminalising FGM, the practice persists, and progress towards reducing prevalence has been very slow. Legal frameworks aimed at eliminating FGM in Egypt have been established through amendments to existing laws, such as the Child Act and the Penal Code. However, challenges remain, including the medicalisation of FGM, which is reported to have reached 75%²³, where parents seek out medical professionals to perform the procedure under the misconception that it is safer. Although the 2021 Egyptian Family Health Survey indicated that there is a significant decrease in the rates of FGM in Egypt, the country is still ranked as the first in medicalisation globally.²⁴
37. Efforts to address FGM include increased penalties for perpetrators, awareness campaigns, and initiatives like Doctors Against FGM, which target medical professionals to discourage the practice. The government has also adopted the National Action Plan to Eliminate Female Circumcision 2022-2026, which is being implemented by the National Committee for Combating Female Circumcision and the National Council for Women. Nevertheless, social norms and religious beliefs continue to perpetuate the harmful practice, where, in some cases, it has become a prerequisite to

²² Empowering Women to Combat Gender-Based Violence in Egypt," UNFPA Egypt, UNFPA Egypt website, <https://egypt.unfpa.org/en/node/22544>, accessed March 21, 2024.

²³ When Health Workers Harm: Medicalization of Female Genital Mutilation in Egypt" Website: <https://www.unfpa.org/news/when-health-workers-harm-medicalization-female-genital-mutilation-egypt>

²⁴ Medical Deception," UNICEF Egypt, accessed 30th March 2024. <https://www.unicef.org/egypt/stories/medical-deception>.

marriage. Additionally, there is a lack of public awareness about the law and the national action plan, which affects their effective implementation. The failure to effectively implement anti-FGM legislation is demonstrated by the fact that there were convictions only in 21 cases of FGM between 2017 to 2021, as reported by the Egyptian government in its response to the List of Issues.²⁵

38. The correlation between FGM and child marriage is significant, as both practices stem from societal norms and cultural beliefs aimed at controlling women's sexuality. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach, including education, awareness, and access to support services for survivors. Additionally, efforts should focus on debunking myths associated with FGM and providing safe shelters for survivors.
39. We respectfully urge the Committee to make the following proposed recommendations to the government of Egypt regarding the violations of the CRC addressed in this section, specifically regarding FGM:
- Facilitate and encourage open discussions about addressing FGM, create safe civic spaces for all stakeholders to engage in these discussions, and provide support services for survivors of FGM.
 - Promote quality research on FGM prevalence, including evaluating the success of existing programs and strategies aimed at addressing FGM, including by amending Egypt's Law regulating Field Research, which restricts the ability of researchers to conduct studies freely.
 - Adopt and implement a comprehensive strategy that encompasses a multi-sectoral approach to ending FGM in Egypt, providing comprehensive sexuality education, and improving access to medical and legal services for affected individuals.
 - Effectively implement the anti-FGM law by encouraging reporting and prosecution of cases and hold accountable medical professionals who perform FGM, including by revoking their medical license.

Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children

40. The online sexual exploitation of children takes various forms, such as sexual grooming, coercion, and blackmailing to send sexual images or engage in live streaming, among others. With increasing access to the internet and digital devices, children are spending more time online, exposing them to more opportunities where they can be made vulnerable to sexual exploitation. According to the Internet Watch Foundation, globally, there is a 360% increase in self-generated sexual imagery of 7 to 10-year-olds from 2020 to 2022 (mainly as a result of grooming and coercion) and a significant increase in the financial sexual extortion of children.²⁶

²⁵ Replies of Egypt to the list of issues relating to its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports, 4th March 2024, CRC /C/EGY/RQ/5-6

²⁶<https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2023/10/18/87-increase-in-child-sexual-abuse-online-global-threat-assessment-2023/>

41. Egypt has experienced challenges in collecting accurate, disaggregated data on the prevalence and different forms of online sexual exploitation of children. One of the main reasons is the difficulty in reporting these crimes due to children's fear of reporting as well as the lack of sufficient awareness among parents, caregivers, and government officials mandated to protect children about the seriousness of these offences. Another reason is the absence of a coherent or precise definition of online sexual exploitation of children in Egyptian laws.
42. However, Law No. 126 of 2008, amending some provisions of the Child Law issued by Law No. 12 of 1996, the Penal Code issued by Law No. 58 of 1937, and Law No. 143 of 1994 regarding civil status, is the law applied in Egypt to combat online sexual exploitation of children. This law includes several provisions that criminalise different forms of online sexual exploitation of children, including using children in pornographic activity and the production of pornographic materials. The law also criminalises the incitement of children to engage in "immoral acts" or assisting them in doing so or anyone who kidnaps a child for sexual exploitation. Other laws that can also be applied to the online sexual exploitation of children include the Law on Combating Information Technology Crimes No. 175 of 2018 and Personal Data Protection Law No. 15 of 2012.
43. Despite the existence of these laws, their insufficient implementation due to lack of awareness, resources, and technical challenges impedes the adequate and effective protection of children from all forms of online sexual exploitation. Furthermore, technology is evolving rapidly, providing new platforms and tools for predators to exploit children. In accordance with the Committee's General Comment No. 25, Egypt "should implement measures that protect children from risks, including cyberaggression and digital technology-facilitated and online child sexual exploitation and abuse, ensure the investigation of such crimes and provide remedy and support for children who are victims."²⁷
44. Egypt needs comprehensive legislation aimed at protecting children from all forms of online sexual exploitation. Such legal protection is essential to address children's growing risks in the digital world. The internet transcends borders. This means that exploitation can occur from anywhere in the world. Laws must incorporate international cooperation and standards to combat online exploitation effectively. Comprehensive laws can focus on punishment and prevention measures, such as education and awareness campaigns, as well as criminal and civil sanctions.
45. We respectfully urge the Committee to make the following proposed recommendations to the government of Egypt regarding the violations of CRC addressed in this section, specifically regarding online sexual exploitation of children:

²⁷ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment*, CRC/C/GC/25, 2 March 2021, para 25.

- Enact comprehensive laws that prevent and protect children from online sexual exploitation and punish perpetrators with clear guidelines for law enforcement to investigate and prosecute online exploitation cases effectively.
- In conformity with CRC General Recommendation No. 25 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment, ensure that the national legal framework identifies national authorities, digital platform providers, parents, caregivers, educators, and other relevant stakeholders as duty-bearers responsible for respecting, protecting, and fulfilling children's rights in the digital environment.
- In conformity with CRC General Recommendation No. 25 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment, Egypt should provide a legal and comprehensive definition of the digital environment, encompassing all digital technologies and platforms that children interact with, including the internet, social media, mobile devices, online gaming, and emerging technologies.
- Collect and make available statistics on online sexual exploitation of children. This data will inform policies and programming by multiple stakeholders.